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Improper Use of Smoking Materials Caused Woburn Fatal Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, Woburn Fire Chief Paul Tortolano and Woburn Police Chief Philip Mahoney announced that the most probable cause of last night's fatal fire at 55 Prospect Street, Woburn was the improper use and disposal of smoking materials. The fire took the life of an adult woman.

Chief Tortolano said, "This is the first fatal fire in Woburn since 2003. A fire death is always very tragic." He added, "Unfortunately eight people have been displaced by the fire, but fortunately the smoke alarms were working and alerted other residents to get out safely." Damage is estimated at \$200,000 and one police officer was treated for smoke inhalation.

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the Woburn Fire Department, the Woburn Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The Middlesex District Attorney's Office was also involved in the investigation.

Coan said, "Smoking is the leading cause of fatal fires and fire deaths in Massachusetts and has been at least as far back as World War II." He added, "We hope that when the fire-safe cigarette law takes effect next January, that these statistics will change." According to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) smoking caused 32% of residential fire deaths in 2006.

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